

testament to the commitment growers have to maintain strong and healthy trees. The retail value of all Christmas trees harvested in 2004 was \$1.4 billion. Live-cut Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since 1850. By 1900, one in five American families decorated live-cut trees during Christmas. By 1930, the tree had become a nearly universal part of the American Christmas. For generations, American families have traveled hundreds and thousands of miles to celebrate the holiday season together at home around the Christmas tree. This year, more than 10,000 trees were donated to American troops by over 750 Christmas tree farmers across the Nation. These Christmas trees were delivered to over 37 bases across 19 States and over 15 countries abroad to spread the holiday spirit to our men and women in uniform who are bravely and honorably serving our Nation throughout this Christmas season.

I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Agriculture and the majority leader for their assistance in getting this resolution to the floor. I urge my colleagues to support this measure, recognizing this important industry, not just for its economic and environmental impact, but also for its cultural contribution to the Christmas holiday. Thank you to Christmas tree growers across the country for their contribution to our economy, our environment, and our Nation's heritage.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I also yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 15.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the joint resolution was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.J. Res. 15.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

#### GEORGE WASHINGTON NATIONAL FOREST LAND CONVEYANCE

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3454) to provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of National Forest System land in the George Washington National Forest in Alleghany County, Virginia, that con-

tains the cemetery of the Central Advent Christian Church and an adjoining tract of land located between the cemetery and road boundaries.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3454

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. LAND CONVEYANCE, CENTRAL ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH CEMETERY AND ADJOINING TRACT, GEORGE WASHINGTON NATIONAL FOREST, ALLEGHANY COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

(a) CONVEYANCE REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall convey, without consideration, to the Central Advent Christian Church of Alleghany County, Virginia (in this section referred to as the "recipient"), all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to a parcel of real property in the George Washington National Forest, Alleghany County, Virginia, consisting of not more than 8 acres, including a cemetery encompassing approximately 6 acres designated as an area of special use for the recipient, and depicted on the Forest Service map showing tract G-2032c and dated August 20, 2002, and the Forest Service map showing the area of special use and dated March 14, 2001.

(b) CONDITION OF CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be subject to the condition that the recipient accept the real property described in such subsection in its condition at the time of the conveyance, commonly known as conveyance "as is".

(c) DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the real property to be conveyed under subsection (a) shall be determined by a survey satisfactory to the Secretary. The cost of the survey shall be borne by the recipient.

(d) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary may require such additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyance under subsection (a) as the Secretary considers appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support today of H.R. 3454. This bill, sponsored by Mr. BOUCHER from Virginia, would convey property in the George Washington National Forest to the Central Advent Christian Church of Alleghany County, Virginia. The parcel will consist of no more than 8 acres, and included in this parcel will be a cemetery encompassing approximately 6 acres.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3454 requires that the church accept the property at the time of the conveyance in an "as is" condition. The exact acreage and legal description of the property to be conveyed will be determined in a survey of USDA's approval. USDA will also set additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyance of the property.

The United States Forest Service has acknowledged that this particular

tract of forest land is difficult to manage. Owning a cemetery tract is inconsistent with the Forest Service mission, which is why they have attempted to sell this property several times without success. I understand the Central Advent Christian Church has already been doing basic maintenance on the cemetery grounds. Conveying this land to the church would enable them to make more significant repairs to the property. This effort deserves congressional support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOX. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today in support of H.R. 3454 which our distinguished ranking member on the Agriculture Committee (Mr. GOODLATTE) has cosponsored with Congressman BOUCHER. H.R. 3454 requires the U.S. Forest Service to convey, without consideration, 8 acres of the George Washington National Forest in Alleghany County, Virginia, to the Central Advent Christian Church. The conveyance includes a 6-acre cemetery and 2 additional acres between the cemetery and Interstate 64.

While typically the Forest Service would sell this property under existing authority, they did not receive any bids when they attempted to sell it. Clearly, the Forest Service should not be in the business of owning a cemetery, particularly that has been managed by the community church since 1941 under a special use permit. The church has tried to acquire the property, but for financial and other reasons has been unsuccessful.

The cemetery also creates some management problems for the agency, since there is a fair amount of maintenance associated with it.

This conveyance makes sense for the Federal Government and for the community church. It will allow the Forest Service to focus on the land Congress intended the agency to manage.

I urge adoption of this bipartisan legislation.

Mr. BOUCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3454, bipartisan legislation which will authorize the conveyance by the Forest Service to the Central Advent Christian Church in Alleghany County, Virginia of a small parcel of land containing a cemetery currently operated by the church. The church and the land in question are located in my Congressional District.

For 66 years, the Central Advent Christian Church has been operating its cemetery through a Special Use permit granted by the U.S. Forest Service. The historic cemetery contains more than 300 graves, two-thirds of which are located on land owned by the U.S. Forest Service. In recent years, maintenance of this land has become difficult for the Forest Service, taking valuable staff time to remove discarded flowers and other items.

It is the desire of the families of those buried in the cemetery, the members of Central Advent Christian Church and the Forest Service that the cemetery be transferred into church ownership, and the bill before the House takes the entirely appropriate step of authorizing the conveyance.